
VIRGINIA COAL MINE SAFETY BOARD

**Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy
Tuesday – May 14, 2015 – 9:00 A.M.**

MINUTES

VIRGINIA COAL MINE SAFETY BOARD

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Patti Church
Richard R. Waddell
Carroll Dale
Mike Kennedy
Joseph Tate
Tom Asbury
Brett Holbrook

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Harless Mullins
Billy Powers

OTHERS PRESENT:

M. Randy Moore, Chief, Division of Mines
Mike Willis, DM Safety Engineer
Patty Varner, DM, Recorder

Meeting Called To Order

Co Chair Patti Church called the meeting to order. A quorum was established with seven members present. All nine positions on the Board are now filled. The Board welcomes newly appointed member, Brett Holbrook.

Co Chair Church called for review of minutes from previous meeting on July 31, 2014; a motion to accept the minutes was made, seconded, and unanimous vote taken. Ms. Church recommended that the vacant Board co-chair position be elected at the next meeting, and encouraged members to volunteer.

Mine Safety Awards 2014

Nominations for the Mine Safety Awards for 2014 were reviewed, approved and voted upon by the Board. The mine operation having the highest number of employee hours with zero lost time accidents in each category will receive the mine safety award. Any other mines which meet the minimum requirements in their category and have zero lost time accidents will receive certificate awards.

Individual nominations included two miners for 40 years of working with no lost time for injury, eleven miners for 30 years of working with no lost time for injury, eight with 20 years, and six with 10 years. Company nominations included one large underground operation, three medium underground operations, three small underground operations, ten large surface operations, five medium surface operations, and three small surface operations. MSHA's Denver database confirms the reportable injury rates. The Board voted unanimously to approve the safety awards. Randy Moore informed the Board that as Chief Mine Inspector he will visit the mine for presentation of the awards. Information on the award presentations will be posted to the DMME web site with links to social media sites to fully recognize these excellent jobs by the recipients in mine safety.

Overview of Virginia Coal Mine Safety Performance and Current Issues

Mike Willis, Mine Safety Engineer, presented the overview of the Virginia coal mine safety performance with emphasis over a ten-year history. Mr. Willis incorporated additional information into this year's review as suggested by the Board from the last meeting. Coal tonnage production figures for 2014 were down about 1.5 million tons from last year at 15.5 million tons total. Reporting tonnage were 46 underground and 32 surface mines. Current tonnage reporting through April 25, 2015 from the Energy Information Agency shows a reduction in coal production for Virginia. The

top 10 producing mines were listed, six of which are under the Alpha Natural Resources umbrella. Employment figures based on reported man hours as well as figures reported to MSHA quarterly show a decline yearly since 2011 at a present figure of 3,177 miners.

There were two fatal accidents in 2014. One of them was at Dominion Coal Corp. Mine No. 30 where a continuous miner operator, while moving the machine, was pinned between the boom and the coal rib, and the other one was at Consol Buchanan No. 1 underground mine, an underground electrical repairman came into contact with 600 volt power supply inside the main control panel of the dual boom roof bolter.

MSHA NFDL (Non-Fatal Days Lost) rating for Virginia looks favorable in comparison to national ratings overall. Surface rating is above the national average and is contributed to slips, trips and fall injuries in an older work force and a challenging work environment. Division of Mines (DM) inspectors' initiatives are key in alerting miners to these type hazards. The six serious personal injuries (SPI) occurring in 2014 were reviewed along with four occurrences to date in 2015. DM Chief issued Operators Memorandum in July, 2014 to clarify that the 24 hour hospital stay that defines a SPI does not have to be immediately after the injury and if an injured mine is re-admitted for later treatment, the DM would consider it a serious personal injury.

Other investigations included one ignition for 2014. No inundations of water and gas have occurred in the last two years. The number of complaint investigations decreased to 15, and details of types were reviewed. Statistics for violations and closure order enforcement activities and other investigations including individual violations were reviewed; these figures were down from previous years.

Substance abuse cases to date total 784 as compared to 753 cases a year ago. The number of new cases coming to the Board of Coal Mining Examiners (BCME) continues to decline. Reinstated miners to date are 232. The decline is attributed to the efforts of the Board of Coal Mining Examiners in addressing substance abuse in mining, and a decrease in new miners being hired.

Statistics on the number of roof falls (15) compared to 36 in 2012 and skin control (rib and brow) failures contribution to serious personal injuries or fatal accidents were reviewed. These numbers continue to decline which is contributed primarily to use of cable roof bolts. A chart showed the skin control failures contribution to serious personal injuries or fatal accidents.

The number of maps and plans processed for 2014 was 872, which number continues to decline over the ten-year tracking period. The number of plans for mining within 200 feet of gas wells totaled 62; approximately 9,000 gas wells exist in Southwest Virginia. The procedures undertaken to approve these type plans were detailed.

DM Chief issued Operator's Memorandum on August 18, 2014 identifying traming of a remote control continuous miner as a "hazardous practice" and requiring operators to submit action plan. Plans must contain provisions for proximity detection systems, trammed from the deck if equipped, or use of a trained spotter. Excepted were those that already were equipped with proximity detection systems and did not intend to operate without using them.

DM Chief issued Operator's Memorandum on July 29, 2014 requiring the following additional supplies at surface mines by January 1, 2015: x-ray translucent air ambulance compatible backboard, portable oxygen unit and AED unit.

Certification examinations are now available on-line and implemented in partnership with Mountain Empire Community College. Exams may be taken at designated locations, scheduled by DM using a proctor. On-line examinations are not mandatory but are encouraged for convenience to the miner and the reduction in paperwork and time.

Coal Mine Safety Law Update

New laws effective on July 1, 2015 are:

- 45.1-161.174 will require tracking systems to be maintained in usable and operative condition.
- 45.1-161.200 will require monitoring systems to be maintained in usable and operative condition.
- 45.1-161.193 will require electric equipment with a potentially dangerous condition to be removed from service until corrected.
- 45.1-161.249 was modified to remove the requirement that the mine foreman must furnish a copy of the Act to the miners.
- 45.1-161.258 will require surface foremen follow all requirements of the Act pertaining to his duties and make miners aware of hazardous conditions.

Mike Kennedy encouraged tracking of bills that the Board has endorsed upon their submission to the legislature to ensure that the language remains as sent up. The Board agreed that a process should be put in place to accomplish this.

2015 DM Initiatives

DM developed the training for continuing education for foremen and presented the programs before the Virginia approved BCME Instructors to conduct training by August 20th.

DMME continues to utilize social media in many aspects. These media can be accessed by links on the DMME web site. DM works to expand web capabilities including plan submission.

The Board may be reconvened in late July to discuss any mine law revisions.

Open Agenda

Mr. Moore invited the Board members to the Governor's Cup Mine Rescue Contest on June 3 and 4 at the University of Virginia at Wise football field. Also, Mr. Moore encouraged the Board to visit the 2015 Mine Energy Expo which will be held at the new school in Dickenson County.

Mike Kennedy suggested that minimal standards be established for companies' individual policies on drug screening in order to equalize effects on work force. Members will check with West Virginia's standards and review the information at the next scheduled meeting.

Richard Waddell suggested that addendums be made to fatality investigations to reflect changes that occur upon violation appeals process for a more accurate record.

❖ **Next Meeting: To be announced at a later date.**

Adjournment

Upon a motion made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Varner

Patty Varner

Secretary